

# BACK INJURY PREVENTION

## How to Lift Safely

Before lifting, think about what you're about to do. Examine the object for sharp corners, slippery spots or other potential hazards. Know and don't exceed your limit. Ask for help if needed or divide the load if possible. Make sure your travel path and destination are free of obstructions. Then follow these steps.



1. Stand close to the load with your feet spread apart about shoulder width, with one foot slightly in front of the other for balance.



2. Squat down bending at the knees (not your waist). Tuck your chin while keeping your back as vertical as possible.



3. Get a firm grasp of the object before beginning the lift.



4. Begin slowly lifting with your LEGS by straightening them. Never twist your body during this step.



5. Once the lift is complete, keep the object as close to the body as possible. As the load's center of gravity moves away from the body, there is a dramatic increase in stress to the lumbar region of the back.

If you must turn while carrying the load, turn using your feet - not your torso.

Place heavy objects at waist height. To place the object below the level of your waist, follow the above steps in reverse order. For loads above waist high, get a stair or ladder and take the load up.

For additional information on proper lifting, go to OSHA's website:  
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/electricalcontractors/materials/index.html>

# BACK INJURY PREVENTION

## Commonly Asked Questions

### **Q. *What are some common causes of back injuries at work?***

- Lifting materials that are too heavy or unstable
- Lifting objects to or from awkward locations
- Repetitive twisting, bending, reaching overhead, or lifting
- Working for long periods in a bent over or strained position
- Slips, trips and falls, i.e., over debris

### **Q. *When carrying a load is it OK to turn, twist or bend my body?***

No. Twisting your torso or bending at the waist while carrying an object greatly increases the stress on your back. Minimize twisting your torso and keep your back straight. Use your feet to make turns while carrying the load and use your legs to raise and lower to/from storage.

### **Q. *Will wearing a back support belt increase my maximum lifting potential?***

No. Back support belts do not make you stronger; they merely remind of proper body position for lifting. Back belts should only be worn under doctor's supervision for the prescribed duration needed to rehabilitate a back injury.

### **Q. *How can I protect myself from overexertion injuries?***

- Lightening the load by:
  - Using a partner when lifting heavy objects.
  - Breaking a larger load into several smaller loads.
- Using proper tools and equipment (i.e., hand truck, cart, pallet jack, forklift, etc.).
- If you get tired, take a break.

### **Q. *How can sitting in my office hurt my back?***

To avoid back injuries from sitting for long periods of time, make sure your chair is ergonomically designed and adjusted to fit you. Take regular breaks to stretch or get up and walk.

### **Q. *Will exercising help me lift better?***

Physical conditioning or stretching programs can help reduce the risk of muscle strain.

### **Q. *Does my job require me to lift heavy objects?***

If your job requires lifting more than 20 pounds it will be noted in your job description. Workers are discouraged from being assigned to jobs that exceed their strength capacities.

Source: <http://www.labsafety.com/refinfo/ezfacts/ezf221.htm?ICID=9EA116>

For additional information on proper lifting, go to OSHA's website:  
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/electricalcontractors/materials/index.html>